

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 17 FEBRUARY 2015

Title of report	RECENT LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATIONS
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Purpose of report	To inform members of the nature of discussions at the recent Charnwood examination and to highlight issues raised in other examinations in the locality
Council Priorities	<p>These are taken from the Council Delivery Plan:</p> <p>Value for Money Business and Jobs Homes and Communities Green Footprints Challenge</p>
<p>Implications:</p> <p>Financial/Staff</p> <p>Link to relevant CAT</p> <p>Risk Management</p> <p>Equalities Impact Screening</p> <p>Human Rights</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>Monitoring the outcome of other examinations can help to identify potential issues which the Council will need to address as part of the Local Plan and/or the subsequent examination.</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p>

Transformational Government	Not applicable
Comments of Head of Paid Service	The Report is Satisfactory
Comments of Section 151 Officer	The Report is Satisfactory
Comments of Deputy Monitoring Officer	The Report is Satisfactory
Consultees	Local Plan Project Board
Background papers	<p>Correspondence (reference EX71) between the Inspectors and the Derby HMA authorities available at www.ambervalley.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/community-planning/community-planning-latest-news/local-plan-part-1-core-strategy-examination-in-public.aspx</p> <p>Correspondence between the Inspector and South Derbyshire District Council www.south-derbys.gov.uk/applications/ExaminationLibrary/EVIDENCE-BASE/SDEX47_note%20to%20council%2016%20december.pdf</p> <p>Correspondence between the Inspector and East Staffordshire Borough Council www.eaststaffsbc.gov.uk/filedepot_download/686/1170</p>
Recommendations	THAT THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTES THE CONTENTS OF THE REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the examination in to the Charnwood Local Plan commenced in March 2014. The Inspector concluded that the examination should be suspended for a period of 6 months in order to allow the local authorities in the Leicester & Leicestershire Housing Market Area (HMA) to reach an agreed position in respect of the amount and distribution of housing across the HMA. This was done with all the authorities signing a Memorandum of Understanding in autumn 2014 which agreed housing on the basis of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).
- 1.2 The examination recommenced on 9 December 2014 and finished on 16 January 2015.
- 1.3 This report outlines for members information the nature of discussions at the examination. It also highlights a number of issues which have recently arisen from other examinations in the locality.

2.0 CHARNWOOD EXAMINATION

- 2.1 The Inspector's report is now awaited, although he has advised Charnwood Borough Council in writing that whilst he considers the plan to be unsound, it can be made sound through a number of modifications which he will propose in due course.
- 2.2 Whilst the Inspector's proposed modifications are not yet available, and so it is not possible to say what concerns he has, it is considered that it would be helpful to provide members with an overview of the examination and the issues discussed so as to help inform our Local Plan.
- 2.3 The sessions before Christmas largely focussed upon matters of a strategic nature such as the amount of housing and employment land required and the overall strategy of the plan, whilst after Christmas the discussions focussed more upon site specific matters related to proposed allocations. In all cases the Inspector set out an agenda to provide a basis for discussion of those matters which he had identified as ones which required examination.
- 2.4 In terms of the issue of housing requirements, this took up the first two days of the examination and was attended by officers of all the HMA authorities. A number of representations from developers had been submitted which were all suggesting different housing figures from those proposed by Charnwood (although also different from each other).
- 2.5 Charnwood were supported by a representative from the consultants (G L Hearn) who had prepared our joint SHMA to address the detailed technical matters which formed a large part of the discussion (for example on assumptions relating to matters such as household formation rates and migration levels). Other matters discussed included:
- The relationship between housing and employment provision, notably the high level aspirations of the LLEP Strategic Economic Plan;
 - The evidence regarding deliverability from each authority's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAA) including a discussion regarding the agreed methodology used by each of the authorities in compiling the SHLAAs. The Inspector also sought - and received - confirmation that each authority was committed to meeting the provision agreed as part of the Memorandum of Understanding. There was a more detailed discussion regarding the ability of Leicester City to meet its own needs;
 - Whether there is a need for Charnwood to plan for a higher housing target to take account of market signals, including affordability
- 2.6 Officers from this Council only attended the discussion in relation to housing provision so were not party to all of the other discussions. It is understood that the Inspector was particularly interested in the deliverability of the various sites/strategic locations identified in the Charnwood Local Plan and whether there was an alternative plan to deal with what happens if delivery rates are not as anticipated.
- 2.7 It will be noted that the vast majority of the examination time was concentrated on housing related issues. This is typical of most examinations and reflects the priority attached to housing by the government. Therefore, it should be anticipated that when our Local Plan is tested by examination this will be the case and that the Inspector will want to be convinced that the proposed level of housing provision can be delivered.

3.0 OTHER EXAMINATIONS

South Derbyshire

- 3.1 This examination commenced on 25 November 2014 and finished on 5 December 2014. Part of the discussion in respect of housing provision was run as a joint session with the Amber Valley Local Plan which is also at examination, with both examination Inspectors in attendance. This is because both South Derbyshire and Amber Valley are within the Derby HMA (along with Derby City) and there is a need for the two authorities to accommodate some unmet need from Derby City.
- 3.2 The Inspectors wrote to both authorities on 15 December 2014. Whilst they accepted that the level of housing provision across the Derby HMA was appropriate, they raised concerns about the technicalities of how the unmet need from Derby had been apportioned between South Derbyshire and Amber Valley and have requested that more work be done on this matter, including the need for a sustainability appraisal of this matter.
- 3.3 The authorities are now addressing the issues raised by the Inspectors with a view to them being able to overcome the Inspectors concerns. It is not clear at this stage as to whether it will be necessary for the Examination to re-open before being able to proceed towards adoption.
- 3.4 There is no reason to think that this could be an issue for our Local Plan as all of the HMA authorities are committed, as signatories to the MOU, to meeting their own needs.
- 3.5 The South Derbyshire Inspector has also raised concerns regarding:
- 5-year housing land supply;
 - Affordable housing policy in relation to viability; and
 - The need for more evidence regarding the viability of strategic housing sites.
- 3.6 Once again members will note the emphasis placed upon housing issues and their deliverability by the Inspector.

East Staffordshire

- 3.7 The examination commenced on 28th October 2014.
- 3.8 The Inspector wrote to the Borough Council on 11th November 2014 and identified a number of issues, including the following, and he has therefore suspended the examination:
- the Sustainability Appraisal is inadequate as submitted and requires further work,
 - the evidence is inadequate to suggest that the housing provision made in the East Staffordshire Local Plan is sufficient to meet needs, particularly having regard to economic factors;
 - the Site Selection Process requires further clarification, and
 - consideration should be given to increasing the number and range of type and size of sites allocated and to adjusting the Housing Trajectory in the interest of the delivery of five year and overall housing land supply.

- 3.9 East Staffordshire are now working to address the concerns raised by the Inspector. Because the Examination has been suspended rather than completed, when this work has been done the Examination will reconvene after which the Inspector will issue a final report. It is understood that the Examination is likely to recommence in March 2015.
- 3.10 In respect of the second bullet point, this is related to whether the housing provision is balanced with the employment provision.